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SUBJECT: U.S. MOVING TO JOIN THE INTERNATIONAL RENEWABLE
ENERGY AGENCY

REF: 2008 STATE 134385

Due to the large number of addressees, this cable is being transmitted twice. Please review both cables for complete list of action and info addressees.

¶1. (SBU) Summary: This is an action request. In a change to our prior position, the USG is carefully considering joining the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) in time for the June 28-30 IRENA preparatory meeting in Egypt. Membership in IRENA could advance the Administration,s objectives with respect to clean energy and climate change. The USG feels that IRENA can be most effective in advancing U.S. foreign policy objectives if a) the organization,s mission is shaped carefully to add value and avoid overlap

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with other initiatives, and b) the organization,s headquarters are located in the UAE, which has submitted an impressive bid. To prepare for the Egypt meeting, during which the headquarters (HQ) and Director-General (DG) will be voted upon, the Department requests that posts approach appropriate host government officials responsible for IRENA (likely some combination of MFA, energy, environment or technology ministries) at the highest appropriate level to explain U.S. views on IRENA, seek support for UAE as HQ, and request host country,s position on the location for the HQ, selection of the DG, and the mission of IRENA. Posts may draw on the background in paras 8-15 below and the main points in para 16 below. The Department requests responses by Tuesday, June 16. End Summary.

OBJECTIVES FOR ALL POSTS

¶2. (SBU) All posts should pursue the following objectives

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when delivering this demarche:

-- First, note that after an internal policy review the U.S. is giving serious consideration to signing the IRENA Statute during the June 28-30 IRENA meeting, pending ongoing consultations with Congress. Reinforce that Congressional support is not a given. Congress will review carefully IRENA,s mission, cost, and where it will be based.

-- Second, highlight that, as potential members of IRENA with responsibility for a large percentage of its budget, we would want to ensure that: a) its mission and action plan identify and fill existing gaps and deficiencies in global activities, rather than duplicate existing programs and b) its operations are aligned with our vision of renewable energy promotion and technology diffusion, consistent with other national, regional and global programs. We also have some technical legal issues with the statute that we will seek to resolve by the Egypt meeting.

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-- Third, underscore that the U.S. government believes the UAE,s bid to host IRENA headquarters is impressive and compelling, and is a factor in the USG,s interest in joining IRENA. Urge support for UAE,s headquarters bid at the June 28-30 meeting in Egypt.

-- Fourth, seek information from host governments on their IRENA position; specifically: a) if they haven,t signed the IRENA Statute, do they plan to? if so, when? b) if they have signed the Statute, when are they likely to ratify? c) if they are participating in the Egypt meeting, what are their views on the location for the HQ and IRENA DG position? d) what are their views on the mission, purpose, and focus IRENA should take? (Note: See Background section for list of countries that have joined or are moving toward doing so.)

POST-SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

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13. (U) EMBASSY BERLIN: Congratulate Germany on its success in launching IRENA. Note that the U.S. hopes to be able to join IRENA and cooperate with Germany, as well as other members, to develop an effective, useful organization. Note that the U.S. is actively consulting with Congress and other countries. Note that ongoing Congressional and Administration support will also be contingent on our collective ability to define IRENA,s mission in a manner that adds value to international efforts to promote renewable energy and does not duplicate other organizations and initiatives. Note U.S. appreciation for Germany,s bid to host IRENA. Their desire to host IRENA demonstrates a strong commitment to diffusion of renewable energy and addressing barriers to broad deployment. Underscore U.S. desire to continue close cooperation on clean energy technologies, both within IRENA and other bilateral and multilateral fora. Emphasize, however, that UAE,s bid to host the IRENA headquarters is an important factor in our support for IRENA. The UAE,s bid is impressive and compelling, and a UAE headquarters will yield important climate change, energy

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security, and broader geopolitical benefits.

14. (U) EMBASSIES COPENHAGEN, VIENNA: Note U.S. appreciation for host country,s bid to host IRENA. Their desire to host IRENA demonstrates a strong commitment to diffusion of renewable energy and addressing barriers to broad deployment. Underscore U.S. desire to continue close cooperation on clean energy technologies, both within IRENA and other bilateral and multilateral fora. Emphasize, however, that UAE,s bid to host the IRENA headquarters is an important factor in our support for IRENA. The UAE,s bid is impressive and compelling, and a UAE headquarters will yield important climate change, energy security, and broader geopolitical benefits.

15. (SBU) EMBASSIES CANBERRA, LONDON, OTTAWA, TOYKO, ABU DHABI: Note U.S. interest in possible opportunities to coordinate on shared goals in the limited time remaining before the meeting in Egypt as well as at the meeting itself (should we sign the IRENA statute).

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16. (SBU) EMBASSY ABU DHABI: Ask the UAE for its expected tally of votes for the HQ competition and to identify key target countries. Seek assurances that the UAE will support an Israeli IRENA office in the UAE. Seek assurances that the UAE will support the U.S. vision for IRENA. Confirm the

UAE,s pledged voluntary contributions to IRENA. Inform the UAE that the U.S. expects the UAE to ratify the IRENA Statute, regardless of the outcome of the HQ competition.

REPORTING DEADLINE

¶17. (U) The Department requests responses by Tuesday, June 16. Please slug responses for EEB/ESC Danielle Monosson, OES/EGC Griff Thompson and IO/EDA Rebecca Webber.

BACKGROUND

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¶18. (U) German-sponsored IRENA launched in January 2009 and currently has 93 signatory countries. Membership in IRENA requires a two step process. First, a country signs the IRENA Statute, and second, the signatory country obtains domestic ratification of the Statute. The ratification process varies by country. The IRENA Statute enters into force once 25 countries deposit their instruments of ratification.

¶19. (U) The US attended the Founding Conference in January (six days after President Obama,s inauguration) as an observer, but did not have an official Administration position. Following the Founding Conference, the first Preparatory Commission assembled. The Preparatory Commission consists of IRENA,s Signatory States and acts as the interim body during the founding period. The Commission discussed the next steps for IRENA and established a Committee for the selection of the Interim Director-General, chaired by

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Lithuania, and a Committee for the selection of the interim headquarters, chaired by the Republic of Korea. An Administrative Committee was formed as well, chaired by Germany. The second session of the Preparatory Commission will be hosted by Egypt, June 28-30, 2009, at which time the selection of both the interim HQ and DG will be made. The US will attend the Egypt meeting, as an IRENA Statute signatory, if the USG decides to join IRENA. Austria, Denmark, Germany, and the UAE have formally requested to host IRENA, and we support the UAE,s candidacy. There are five candidates for the DG position, from Denmark, France, Greece, Spain, and Nigeria; the USG does not have a position on the DG at this time.

¶10. (SBU) Countries that the Department understands will be signing the IRENA Statute prior to the Egypt meeting include Australia, the United Kingdom and possibly Japan and Canada. In addition, we are interested to know the views of Brazil, China, Indonesia, Mexico, Russia, and South Africa on joining IRENA and its mission, HQ and DG.

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¶11. (SBU) Following several weeks of interagency deliberation, the U.S. is moving towards joining IRENA and is taking the necessary internal steps to be able to sign the IRENA Statute, if certain internal concerns can be resolved (outlined in paras 12-13 below), particularly consultations with Congress as Congressional approval is needed for U.S. membership and funding.

¶12. (SBU) If the USG determines that there is sufficient Congressional support and that other concerns are resolved, we intend to sign the IRENA Statute at the late June IRENA

meeting and then ratify at a future date. Diplomatic outreach to convey U.S. preferences for the mission and HQ of IRENA is critical to influencing decisions at the Egypt IRENA meeting. Post reporting will inform Washington's decision process. A formal, final decision on joining IRENA will be reached through the Circular 175 process as early as next week. The Department will transmit a subsequent cable to update posts.

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¶13. (SBU) As the USG considers joining IRENA, Washington would encourage IRENA members to support the UAE as the HQ of IRENA. The USG would also urge that IRENA focus on capacity building in developing countries, especially through technical cooperation, rather than engage in building or helping finance renewable energy projects.

¶14. Signatory countries as of June 10, 2009 are listed below. The Department understands that none of these countries has yet ratified the Statute.

-- AF: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo (Republic of), Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Republic of Guinea, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Uganda, Zambia

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-- EAP: Mongolia, Nepal, Philippines, Republic of Korea

-- EUR: Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

-- NEA: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen

-- SCA: Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Tajikistan

-- WHA: Argentina, Chile, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru, Uruguay

¶15. (U) Please see reftel for additional background on IRENA

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and the evolution of the U.S. position.

SUGGESTED TALKING POINTS

¶16. (U) Suggested TALKING POINTS FOR POSTS IN THE SIGNATORY COUNTRIES (excluding Iran) and Australia, Canada, China, Brazil, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, Russia, South Africa, the UK

-- (U) The U.S. is moving towards joining IRENA and is taking the necessary internal steps to be able to sign the IRENA Statute, if certain concerns can be resolved.

Why Does the U.S. Want to Join IRENA?

The U.S. strongly supports renewable energy, both domestically and internationally, and those multilateral institutions promoting its deployment.

IRENA offers the potential - if focused appropriately - to substantially scale up global use of renewable energy

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through capacity building and networking that do not currently exist in any other multilateral forum on energy.

IRENA can help improve public policy makers, understanding of renewable energy policy requirements and best practices for technology diffusion. Renewable energy technologies address the multiple domestic and international objectives of energy security, climate change mitigation, economic growth and job creation, and cleaner air quality.

U.S. Vision of IRENA Mission

As a member of IRENA, we would want to ensure that:

- o its mission and action plan identify and fill existing gaps and deficiencies in global activities, rather than duplicate existing programs
- o its operations are aligned with our vision of renewable energy promotion and technology diffusion, and consistent with other national, regional and global programs.

IRENA,s primary function should be capacity building and technical assistance work with developing countries, at both the national and sub-national levels, through the

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exchange of best practices and a menu of policy options.

Why Support the UAE as IRENA Headquarters?

The UAE has submitted a strong bid for hosting IRENA, including a promise of significant funding.

UAE,s long-term commitment to transform its energy sector from one reliant on oil and gas to one that thrives on renewable and alternative energies and energy efficient technology should be supported.

The UAE,s location facilitates the coordination of global efforts to counter climate change. IRENA would be the first Middle-East headquartered permanent international organization with a focus on clean energy technology.

The selection of an OPEC country to host IRENA would send an important positive message about the global transition to a low-carbon economy.

The bulk of global energy demand growth is expected to come from Asia and the Middle East, making a UAE headquarters a practical choice.

(For Embassies Berlin, London, Paris, Oslo, Tel Aviv)

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Given Israel,s commitment to join, a UAE-based IRENA could provide a vehicle for Arab-Israeli interaction. It could also provide a means for Israel to open an office in the UAE; a significant step in the Middle East.

If Asked, Challenges to U.S. Joining

The USG needs support of the U.S. Congress) both approval to join and allocation of funding for IRENA. We cannot join IRENA without Congressional support. Consultations with the Congress, to gauge level of support, are ongoing. (Note: There is no existing funding to support U.S. membership in IRENA. The U.S. would be required to contribute 22% of the budget, after the USG ratifies. IRENA,s annual budget is \$17 million in FY10, growing to at least \$48 million over time. End note.)

The USG supports an IRENA whose primary function is capacity building and technical assistance work with developing countries, at both the national and sub-national levels, through the exchange of best practices and a menu of policy options. The USG is concerned that IRENA could

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duplicate work in several other multilateral organizations.

END SUGGESTED TALKING POINTS

POINT OF CONTACT

¶17. (U) Please contact EEB/ESC Danielle Monosson, OES/EGC Griff Thompson, and IO/EDA Rebecca Webber with questions or for additional information. The Department appreciates posts, efforts.
CLINTON